

mipo companion



{Featured Artist Frederic Mantos}

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1.

The pure products of Omaha go.

They shall meet again somewhere inside the baffled pages.

They go on-stage to play with lions.

Moreover the voiceover: "There are memories every night, the secret is pushing the animal into the correct cage *without you or the animal ever* recognizing the cage. Without *you or the animal* ever moving. And without my help, for *I* will be in the muddy pond-water, wondering about my whereabouts."

& there is fog in the middle of my interview as I ask my potential employer about hallelujah & swallowing snakes & he says, "Cages everywhere. The secret is not being an animal."

If I say disco is back is it the same as saying the rats are only animals if I want them to be?

The shoppers pause as a pair of owls abandons their bodies.

Someone laughs in his or her tradition.

Now pity.

Measured inside & out.

A soldier pities the girl he lays himself down as.

If a bullet knows the velocity of such anger, then it has an extraordinary opportunity : I went from New York to Omaha & didn't kill a thing.

2.

I used to carry a memory around.

Now I carry a winner.

Every new dance is a new test & each time I pass easily for I refuse to answer any questions.

My soldier eats with a fork, stands on a path, feels the company of shades, relies upon a mystery not of his own creation but he still cuts the cakes I bring, still warms my shovel.

Also out of the mist comes more mist: "many journeys lie ahead for me, parallel to yours, yet I will remain as before, without alteration, weeping over my shadow."

3.

A powerful wind lifts a dog into a bullet's path.

The dog does not put on the bullet's power.
So much for superficial form.

LOOKING FOR BLACKBIRDS, HARTFORD

Your postcard from Varadero Beach is on my dresser at home, where the surf of it rolls day and night making mild Cuban sounds

—Wallace Stevens, letter to José Rodríguez Feo

8/16

Ladies in charcoal and pink Chanel suits sip hot Chai from glass mugs at Michael's. They mind the afternoon with eyes fixed on the side of their faces, like blackbirds.

10/14

The rose-thatched gazebo at Elizabeth Park has bared itself into a cloud of thorny vines where even blackbirds do not perch.

11/1

Along a row of Perfect-Six town homes, a woman matted by a field of red brick caws out of a third floor window like a blackbird needing other blackbirds.

12/19

Near the end of fall the black leaves look like feathers strewn over lawns.

12/21

After the first snowfall nothing remains black, not even the night. Nothing breaks the white reverence, not even a blackbird.

1/5

The reservoir has hardened into a bed of ice expanding, groaning. It's the only sound I hear complaining of winter through the mountains.

1/28

Airplanes pass. Their shadows land like black birds on the snowy fields before the runway.

2/3

The buildings downtown stand like chess pieces in a stalemate against the frozen riverfront that will not break until a blackbird flies.

2/24

The Portuguese men in heavy black coats gather like blackbirds at La Estrella heckling over Old World days and the World Cup.

3/18

All the bakery cases along Franklin Avenue in Little Italy, glitter with sprinkled cannoli, anise candies, and iced cookies. But no pies.

4/2

At the bus stop on Park and Main, I catch humming birds hovering in the rainforest eyes of puertorriqueños. Where are my pájaros negros?

4/13

On the telephone lines dripping with snow in my window, there ought to be blackbirds. They ought to be slitting the sky open.

WINTER OF THE VOLCANOES, GUATEMALA

Volcanoes everywhere, like cathedrals at the end of every stretch of cobblestone I wobble through. Volcanoes triangulating the view in every window, and reading over my shoulder on the patio at night, funneling the stars between their peaks, threatening to grumble and leave *La Antigua* to rise a third time out of ruin. Volcanoes, keeping watch like a jury of five gods: Acatenango, Fuego, Tejamulco, Agua, and Pacaya, the one I climbed, step by step through rows of corn groomed like manes by Mayan hands, through the quilt work of terrace farmers' patches, through clouds veiling through pinewood forests, until I walked in pumice fields, barren as the moon, if the moon were black, and spelled out my name with freshly minted stones I laid down to claim I was here on this newly kilned rock that in a few eons will be the soil of the valley, the earth I savor in my coffee, the dust that settles over the sills and counter tops. I scaled the peak, reached the crater, and stood balanced on its igneous lip, speechless, looking into the cauldron of molten, blood-orange petals, a pearlescent fire, an open wound weeping smoke, terrified I might fall, terrified that, for a moment, I'd let myself be seduced by the pure, living heart of the raw earth, saying: here, let me take you back.

Darlene

David Hernandez

She chops the Amazonian strain mushroom,
a small rubber umbrella splitting open

and open. Lets the pieces fall from her hand
into a blender hemorrhaging cranberry juice.

Chatter and whiz, crimson dulled to mauve.
She drinks and waits for her mind's funhouse

to open its double-doors. On the carpet again
staring at the painting, seascape on velvet.

Soon the waves begin to crash against a shore
dark as obsidian, crest upon crest unfurling

like a fistful of shook tinsel. The glittered
hours sail past and still on the floor,

spellbound by this celestial ocean. Twilight
when she turns to the green leaf stuck

to the window-screen. No, not a leaf,
but a hummingbird, its needle-beak caught

in the mesh. It flutters and rests, flutters
and rests until she cages the bird in her hands,

its heart clicking wildly against her palm.
She could go nowhere or anywhere now.

She opens his fingers. And by opening,
paints the sky with a stroke of emerald.



{Featured Artist Frederic Manton}

David Hernandez

David Hernandez's first full-length book of poems, **A House Waiting for Music**, was published by Tupelo Press. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *TriQuarterly*, *Southern Review*, *Epoch*, *Iowa Review*, *Cream City Review*, *AGNI* and *Quarterly West*. His drawings have also appeared in literary magazines, including *Other Voices*, *Gargoyle*, and a feature in *Indiana Review*. A recipient of a grant from the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation, his chapbook collections include **Man Climbs Out of Manhole** and **Donating the Heart**. David is the poetry editor for *Swink*. He lives in Long Beach, CA and is married to writer Lisa Glatt. Visit his website at www.DavidAHernandez.com.



Michael Lohre

**Doris Maxa, 8, Waits For No Mail With
Her Five Sisters In Their Bedroom
Above A General Store And Dance Hall
In Seaforth, MN, Population 67, Circa
1945**

Three brothers go off to war
and Gordon whispers to young Doris,

her thin arms crucifixing the door,
"You're my favorite sister, Doris."

The first two Christmases he sends oranges
—then he is shot manning the radio

in a bomber spiraling to Germany below.
Gordon wears no parachute but the pilot

heaves his limp body out a door to the sky,
and prays for a miracle to save his life.

Neil, a prisoner but alive near Berlin,
never sees his brother's body tumbling.

He scratches at his hand near a camp fence—
mining for lice and dreaming tunnels.

Gordon must roll his eyes east to Russell,
the muscular Marine fighting in a foxhole

of sweltering volcanic ash and sulfur
on Iwo Jima. Gordon sees the pill boxes

hiding Kuribayashi and that violent job
with high wages in flames and bodies.

There is nothing to do but keep dying,
to see the war's end and Russell surviving

only to be killed by a passenger train
while driving to make Seaforth from Maine

after being served divorce papers
and a fifth of whiskey on his brain.

So hit this earth, Gordon. Make your own grave.
Your little sister lives in this Creation

and she rolled your oranges in the winter cold.
Her hands peeled each skin from its home

in three white pieces, dried them by the stove,
and carried them away when they turned gold.

With skins and scissors, her hands make the shapes
of butterflies and of brothers and of angels.

Doris pins their wings into the empty walls:
Doris has a design for you to be beautiful.

The Holy Ghost Of September, 1969

I walked up beneath her elbow
and touched one finger

to my mother's forearm,
her hands still on dishes

in the sink. She flinched
like she had been bitten

by a fish. Her Bible black hair
flinched. When mother looked

down at me she didn't move
her lips or her jaw to speak.

She said, You don't love me
either. My father continued

eating. I remember his pale
blue eyes marching around

the walls. He wiped angelfood
cake crumbs from his plate

with his brown shirt sleeve.
This is my first clear memory.

There was still cake bearing a few
yellow flames on the counter.

I ate the candles and loved them.



Michael Lohre was born and raised on a cash crop and livestock farm in southern Minnesota. He currently teaches writing at The Ohio State University-Marion. His poems and stories have appeared in *Doubletake*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *Grain*, among others. He is at work on his first novel: **The Long Run of Robert Red Cloud**.

Romancing The Numbers

Miranda, naked, sits cross-legged on the bed.
She is loving a man with her eyes only
because he does not exist. She has made him
up in her mind and he is the perfect lover.
His kisses cover her body, reach every crevice,
shed new light on darkness.

Miranda rocks back and forth and shakes her head,
counting beats of her heart. She is practicing Love
in the Perfumed Garden, the Arabic way.
She is on number fourteen and by the time
she reaches twenty-five, she will die of ecstasy.
She knows this and does not mind.

"Desire is the wish for heaven," she says,
her hands fluttering like hummingbirds
around her body. She feels them peck and bite,
knows the power of suggestion.
What, after all, is reality, but a different spatial plane,
a riddle we move to, traveling in circles?

It is not the answer, she thinks, that binds us,
it is the question unasked—
the one where purpose is not a definition
but an adventure yet to be had.
Miranda sighs, lies down and closes her eyes.
Her lover sleeps, then brings her gently to fifteen.

Barbra Nightingale



{Featured Artist Frederic Manton}

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Barbra Nightingale



Barbra Nightingale has had over 200 poems accepted for or published in numerous poetry journals and anthologies. Her latest manuscript, *The Geometry of Dreams*, explores the relationship between language and math, and is looking for a publisher. **Singing in the Key of L**, her first full length collection, won the 1999 Stevens Poetry Manuscript Award and was published by the National Federation of Poetry Societies (June, 1999). She is a Professor of English at Broward Community College, South campus, Florida.

E. Ethelbert Miller

Borderline

You walk into a new bookstore
because you love books. You love
sports too but there's no game like
writing. Oh, but you never learned
to dribble. The critics call you Little
League. Now you walk to the poetry
section and there's Maya Angelou's
books, all of them. On a lower shelf
you find the letter M. Your books
should be here, maybe next to Madhubuti
or not far from Milton. You're not here
and you're not there. You look for ME.
That begins with M doesn't it?

Emmett Till Looks At A Photo Album From Iraq

Sometimes I try to remind folks that Money,
Mississippi was a jail too.

Hoods come in all sizes.

I look at the pictures in this book
and see myself

whistling at the lady guard
who gives the thumbs up.

Life is an open coffin
when we live with our eyes closed.

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E. Ethelbert Miller



E. Ethelbert Miller is the former chair of the Humanities Council of Washington, D.C. and a core faculty member of the Bennington Writing Seminars at Bennington College in Vermont. He has been the director of the African American Resource Center at Howard University since 1974. Author and editor of several books of poetry including *Where Are the Love*

Poems for Dictators? How We Sleep on the Nights We Don't Make Love and In Search of Color Everywhere.

His memoir *Fathering Words: The Making of an African American Writer* was published in 2000. It was selected by the DC WE READ program in 2003 as the book all Washington residents were encouraged to read.

Mr. Miller has been honored by Laura Bush and the White House at the National Book Festival in 2001 and 2003. His poetry has been heard on the HBO Def Jam Poetry program. Mr. Miller can also be heard on a regular basis on National Public Radio.

Recently he became one of the editors of *Poet Lore* magazine and a board member of the Writer's Center in Bethesda, Maryland. (*visit web site*)

TERRORISM

Neither fiction nor a discourse
but flowers. The liminal edge
of what has been—the suspension
of daily activity where what is
possible outweighs the probable
crisis ever bridging backwards
into history. Prophecies to explain
why eyes are glued to glass,
why laughter seems unable
to return to the streets just yet
though “it’s safer now to travel
than ever,” messages of love
scrawled by children onto strips
of construction paper pasted
onto an American flag delivered
to a firehouse where passers-by
stop to weep. *Is that a dumpster
or the smell of rotting flesh?*
passed on in whispers—the upper
level deck of the sight-seeing bus
filling up again. Should the Towers
be rebuilt? Should ashes be smeared
across our foreheads, our clothing
rent instead of lighting candles
and leaving bouquets under
the photos of those still missing?
More and more forced to take
public transportation—the carpool
rule requiring us to “buddy-up”
as we play that game of holding
our breaths as long as we can
riding through the Lincoln Tunnel—
me on my cell telling you this,
wasting away my anytime minutes
while the word “crusade” is banished
from our President’s lexicon—
reported incidents of road rage
down, your flag pin but a show
of solidarity if not a talisman
warding off those baseball bats
one Arab said to another seated
next to me—none of it really
any good against anthrax, plague
or VX gas, not even surgical
masks carried in our packs for luck.

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BEAUTY

Forty-six bodies identified. Others
found only in parts. A demand
for Nostradamus on the rise: *In the city
of York, there will be a great collapse—
two twin brothers torn apart by a third
big war to begin when the city burns—*
tents from Fashion Week in Bryant Park sponsored
by Mercedes Benz converted into
staging areas for the dead—dates proposed
for the Emmys though Miss America
will go on as the seventy-two virgins
of Paradise welcome the martyrs in—

Timothy Liu



Photo credit: William Fridrich
www.fridrichdesign.com

Timothy Liu is the author of five books of poems, most recently *Of Thee I Sing* (Georgia, 2004). His new book, *E. Pluribus Unum AKA Kamikazee Pilots In Paradise*, is forthcoming from Southern Illinois in 2005. An Associate Professor of English at William Paterson University, he lives in Hoboken, New Jersey.

LETTER TO BERTHA MASON ROCHESTER

If I could, I'd save you.
Flies beneath your bed hiss Bertha, Antoinette,
Bertha—though you plug your ears
with lima beans, syllables seep
in like dust pushing past closed shutters,
like locoweed creeping across the garden wall,
the mute battlements. Better to bust out of your cell,
to let the oversized roach motel burn
before your so-called-husband stuffs you
in a body bag, seals you like a cracker in a Ziploc.
I'd set you up in a beach side condo
stocked with your favorite dahlias:
Arabian Nights, Black Satins, Burma Gems.
I'd hire a good massage therapist, and enroll
you in yoga classes. I'd take you to a spa,
treat you to a mud bath, restore those charcoal
stained feet to their original hue,
have a stylist trim that cavewoman hair.
You'd take up kickboxing and swimming.
You'd see a shrink who specializes in pyromania,
who'd prescribe an antidepressant cocktail
for those unpredictable mood swings and panic attacks.
After shopping for a new wardrobe, a red dress
and matching slingbacks, we'd climb the statue of Liberty,
we'd toss your straight jacket into the ocean,
and along with it each vestige of sadness
that has tinged your bloodshot eyes.
I'd make you forget Edward.
I'd cradle your face in my hands and I'd kiss you,
a hypnotic lip-lock extinguishing each bad memory,
obliterating suffering from your lexicon.
Bertha, if I could, I'd save you.

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Rita Maria Martinez

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Because her left hip is higher
than the right, she measures the pool
water's pH every day. Because
her right breast is larger than the left,
she is skeptical of new & improved
laundry detergent, of buy-one-
get-one-free advertisements.
She puckers, she contours, she
slathers her kisser with Pink
Panther lipstick before slipping
under plaid quilts because
there's a macaroni-shaped scar
on her lip. And because her lips continue
to move after she finishes speaking,
she reads the Bible, wears red flannel,
says she's the first female to speak
a silent tongue. The mystery
in her life ponders why she pours
ketchup across the periphery
of her burger before every bite, why
she refuses to eat scrambled eggs
unless she sprinkles a dash
of salt for each of pepper.
And because her left eye twitches
when she eats, she pitches her fork
into a piece of chocolate cream
pie and pops it in her mouth
for the cast of *Unsolved Mysteries*,
for *The National Enquirer*,
for *The Guinness Book of World Records*

NAUTICA

I was walking toward the bus stop
when a guy whizzed by like a bike messenger.
I can't tell you what he looked like
or what he wore, only that the scent
of his cologne lingered as if saying hello--
and that he smelled like you, like the blue flask
of Nautica you kept in your glove
compartment, like my purple turtleneck
on nights I sank into bed carrying
your scent the way little girls
carry dolls to their beds, the way men
carry loose change in their pockets
all day, without realizing.



Rita Maria Martinez lives in Miami, Florida. She is a writer and proofreader for Miami Dade College. A graduate of Florida International University's M.F.A. Creative Writing Program. Rita's poems have appeared in Gulf Stream Magazine, Diagram, Mangrove, Street Miami and Ploughshares.

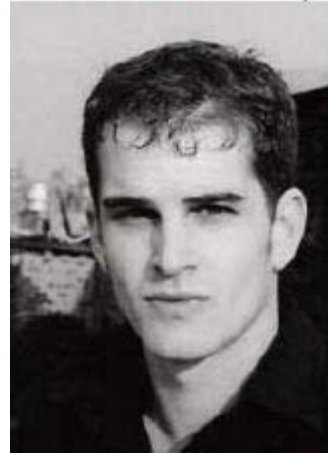
CHERRIES IN THE FACTORY OF BLACKNESS

Even where the cherry emits the only
glow; “can I bum a smoke” and I
love you like an alibi; over the sterno
a marshmallow on a pitchfork blackens;
where the absence of the sparkling is an earring
adored yet neglected in a tackle box, a snelled
fishhook threaded through her lobe in lieu
of the perfectly compassed silver hoop;
Even where security in the dim is a form
of barking through dulled molars;
according to the plummet, according to the dark;
of course a power outage then the tyranny
of the fuse box; near the wick of the lambent
candle on the table a parabola of blue-
blackness inside light inside black-
blueness; close the eyes and squeal;
Even where deeper registers of color
locate deeper registers of sound; the neurotic
wail of an unseen killdeer, a man leaning
into formica to order the appetizer
“bluebirds over bullet wounds”;
the moss-rot smell of indigo space;
according to the plummet, according to the dark;
Even where water alone refuses its own
claustrophobia and every memento
is a form of onyx; the stoic bronze monkey
on the platter’s all shadows and balances
a basket of black opium on his head;
chase the dragon, close the eyes;
look, the hood torn off at dusk to run
screaming through the cherry trees;
Even where at this color and hour you remove
your sadness, fold it in thirds, and place it
at the foot of the mattress to keep
warm for wearing in better light

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Kate Evans’s poetry, stories, and essays have appeared, or are forthcoming, in *The North American Review*, *Seattle Review*, *Santa Monica Review*, *The National Poetry Review*, *Under the Sun*, *Elixir*, *Rhino*, *Harrington Lesbian Fiction Quarterly*, and others. Her book, **Negotiating the Self: Identity, Sexuality, and Emotion in Learning to Teach**, was published by Routledge in 2002. She lives in Santa Cruz, California and teaches at U.C. Santa Cruz.

Ted Mathys



Ted Mathys’s first book of poetry, **Forge**, is forthcoming from Coffee House Press in 2005. Poems have appeared or are slated to appear in *Aufgabe*, *Black Warrior Review*, *The Canary*, *Colorado Review*, *Fence*, *Jubilat*, *Ploughshares*, and elsewhere. Originally from Ohio, he currently lives in Manhattan. Photo credit: Leah Wiste.

Kate Evans

Above the Town

Sometimes I like to pretend we’re Chagall
and Bella, flying like kites above the town,
afloat in air like sea. Yes, the painting’s fairly

water-like, greens, grays, blues, Bella’s hair
buoyant, her arm drifting, her black gown
pulling down at the throat. And Chagall’s

arm around her, his leg outspread—he’s pulling
her ashore. God, he is. She has drowned,
you can see she’s gone, her flat unblinking stare,

and his eyes are ringed with gray. There,
can’t you see? He jumped in when he found
her floating, her seaweed black hair, the pall

of her alabaster skin. Without him, she’d fall
to the town below. Fueled by overpowering
grief and love, he transforms water to air,

that’s all he can do, I see now, just barely
hold on. Now I see a grave in the sky, down
and up reversed. One of us will die first.

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Color Blind

So I can't know my blue mind. So what? So I've never visited the house where he lives with his wife and dogs, where I sometimes imagine him dozing in his blue hammock, while the mutts sniff around in the bushes or scratch their fleas and whine—

My green mind is smitten by every pretty woman he sees, so he stays home and watches TV to be safe, while my red mind wakes at all hours and barks for no reason, annoying us all.

My yellow mind might be content to be a river or a small forest pond, clean enough to drink.

What fun to swim naked in water that clean, to dive to the bottom, where it's numbing cold, and taste that clarity! But what I really mean

is this: In the vast mind of purple that still looks black to my colorblind eyes, my father lay down some nights and told me a story and fell asleep beside me. When my mother looked in and saw us lying there, she leaned down, kissed us and turned off the light. Then I'd hear her

playing loud records. I'd hear her singing songs in languages she didn't know. I'd hear her making phone calls, and I'd smell the rich aromas of her cooking, of her perfume. I heard her drive away one night, forever. But the next night she came in, lay down beside me and slept, turning gray.

Michael Hettich

Several Ways To Vanish

One summer afternoon my girlfriend asked me to tighten her belt so her waist would look smaller.

While she sucked her belly I pulled tight and fastened. And when she exhaled, her whole body, which was skinny and frail, bulged around her tight belt. When I reached out to unfasten the buckle, she batted my hand away playfully: you'll like me more.

A family of foxes lived beneath her parents' house. In the evening when we sat on the porch and held hands they yapped and barked softly right beneath our feet. One evening my girlfriend climbed through the crawl space between the floor and the ground to try to scare them away. She'd grown thinner every day.

I could hear her crawling below us while her father talked about varnishes and waxes and different kinds of oil, about lubricants and additives, sealants and adhesives. He talked about plumbing supplies, about deck stain and mildew. I watched fireflies rise from the damp grass into the star-filled sky.

Her mother brought out a plate of warm cookies. My girlfriend knocked on the floor and called for a flashlight. Coming dear, we sang back in unison, chewing. Her mother poured another glass of milk.

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Michael Hettich has published twelve books of poetry, most of them chapbooks and limited editions. His poems and essays have appeared widely in such journals as *The Cimarron Review*, *Hayden's Ferry*, *The Literary Review*, *New Letters*, *TriQuarterly* and *Witness*. He has two new books forthcoming in 2005. He lives with his family in Miami.

Sun Valley Serenade

James Brock

For the black ice number, the choreographer
writes his dance on Sonja Henie, marks
where she will commit to one final spin,
picking her toe to stop, smiling directly

to the camera. The trick: how to keep
the movement slow, so as not to slice
into the black ice, dyed with ink, spitting
onto her outfit, which must be white,

and her hair, which must be blonde.
And for this year, 1940, late fall, Idaho
is Hollywood, two years after Averell Harriman
has opened the resort—and also in

production, it's A Woman's Face, and
Joan Crawford walks through an exterior
shot. Through this early winter snow
she leaves the doctor's office, her scar

erased by surgery: the woman with the
cold heart becomes the beautiful woman
with the cold heart, a monster, declares
Melvyn Douglas, the surgeon in love with

his work. It's Gary Cooper visiting Hemingway
for goose hunting, and they will return later
in the season, when the Nicholas Brothers
and Glenn Miller and Dorothy Dandridge

have arrived, although Hemingway will say
how the only Negress artist remains Josephine
Baker, and Coop will tell Hemingway
there he goes again, all full of Paris. Hemingway

will get the last word, that Paris and war
gave Gary Cooper his greatest role.
For the movie stars, nothing but to stroll
the Sun Valley Inn, loiter by the outdoor

ice rink at night, as the director of photography
reads his light meter against the black ice,
what Zanuck had ordered specifically for this movie.
Henie's a tired franchise already, but still on

contract. "Make the ice look like a floor,

something that Rogers and Astaire would glide
over." But he budgets \$7000 for the scene, enough
for two days of shooting, and nothing more.

For the final take, it's Henie in her last available
outfit, the other costumes stained
from the falls, the ink beading in its freezing,
and she cries to her director, it's "grooty,"

meaning "gritty" or "grouty," but he has
seen this panic before, and Zanuck has warned him,
too, of Henie in particular, all
excuses and ermine, and so it's Henie,

and she's on her final spin, crisp
through and through, the spin tightening,
and before she cleats the ice, everyone
can see the centrifuged run of ink

lip her skirt, see the two days
in the tank, and she sees it, too, still
in her spinning, but why not keep the spinning,
with all these lights, all these people?

And she owes them everything, waiting
through war and Depression and boredom,
she owes them some Olympian razz-a-ma-tazz,
something that will make someone in

the audience gasp oh. What's a goddess for?
Who cares if it's Zanuck's show? His lousy dime?
Why not deliver the real goods this time?
Hit it, Sonja! Hit it!

Poems © James Brock 2005. All rights reserved.



James Brock is the author of two books of poetry, *The Sunshine Mine Disaster* and *Nearly Florida*. His poetry has recently been published in *North American Review*, *Sunspinner*, *Caffeine Destiny*, and *88*. Currently he lives in Fort Myers, where he is an Associate Professor of English at Florida Gulf Coast University. For kicks, he travels between Miami, Nashville, and Idaho.

ACCIDENT REPORT

"I couldn't push my street-parked old sedan through the snow plow's nine inch wall of ice, so I trudged downstairs, scaring basement mice, and climbed into my brand new mini van with four wheel drive, keyless entry and a thermometer and an electric compass, which I call my Global Positioning Device. I started up, eased on the gas, and rammed the right side frame of my garage's door, shearing off my power side view mirror (two hundred dollars plus an hour's labor). Then I backed up and crumpled my rear hatch just enough so that it will not latch. (Six hundred more). I walked to the liquor store."

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Richard Cecil



Richard Cecil's fourth collection of poems is **Twenty First Century Blues** (Southern Illinois University Press). He teaches in the Spalding Brief Residency MFA program and at Indiana University, Bloomington.

Eleventh Hour of Aquarius

Midnight comes as it always does
in the whispering trees; half moon
bruised sky, the sound of soft rain
falling is your lover weeping, a child
crying for her mother in the dark
or a wild animal scratching at the window.

A woman's scream shatters
the illusion of dream; you are not swimming
and she is not the Lady of the Lake, Water
Bearer, lover of Virgo. She is your curse,
witch, some other woman and you must
witness her drowning break your heart.

You cannot rescue her, nor she, you. She is
and is not you; but you do not know this
stranger who betrays the womb—part lamb,
part wolf in panther skin who stalks your sleep,
endless night, possessed and voracious
she is bleeding and this is her cycle
of forgetfulness in drink;

her remembrance torn to flesh, she will
devour and chew off her own leg to free
herself and beg forgiveness. And I ask you
what salvation is there in the ache of a phantom
limb, taste of iron, bitter salt. Tell me
tell me, tell me.

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Richard Cecil

AUTUMN GETAWAY

The dollar's sinking. By June, I won't be able
to afford to pay for a flight to Italy.
But when I trace my thumb across my globe
from Italy to North America,
I discover that the latitude of Rome's
about the same as Detroit's and Chicago's,
which means that Italy is as deprived
of sun as Indiana in December.
But sitting here, trapped in the USA,
October drizzle streaking filthy windows,
my thumb still gritty from its recent passage
from east to west, like Christopher Columbus,
across my dusty globe's blue-white Atlantic,
I'm desperate to delude myself with hope.
My money's losing value every minute,
so shouldn't I lock in this bargain airfare
before Northwest withdraws it or goes bankrupt?

Three hundred dollars round trip to Milan!
I'll slosh through soggy Venice soaking up
Chianti, Prosecco, and the Renaissance,
then board a south bound Euro Star and ride
until the sun breaks through the overcast,
or else the train runs out of land to cross.
In that case I'll climb down in Brindisi
and wheel my suitcase to the ferry dock
and buy low-season deck-class to Corfu,
where, I've heard, it rains throughout November.
So I'll sail south to Ithaca, then Crete—
so close to Africa it must be sunny.
But, oh, the food's so bad there! Olive oil
soaks everything and there's just instant coffee
and Melba toast in plastic wrap for breakfast.
Please sail me back to gloomy Italy,
to Rome and wine and pasta—and high ceilings
that chill all rooms to fifty five degrees.
Fly me home, I cry out, in my dream.
Voila! I'm back, again, in Indiana,
warm, well-fed, not poor, still miserable.

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Mia



Mia, editor of *Tryst*, was born in Korea. She graduated from the University of Texas with a Bachelor's in Creative Writing. Her most recent poetry has been published at *Lotus Blooms*, *Ariga*, *MiPo Zines*, *three candles*, *Pixiport* and others. Her archived work is available at *Mentress Moon*, *Wired Hearts/Wired Art*, *Pierian Springs*, *Snow Monkey Press*, and *Comrades*.

Michael Schiavo

The Town Where God Will Ret

In a tangled country, when all the camphor
Unlit has been drawn out, when all going is gone,
And the watchmen no longer ask questions,
Only then will love without its veil be put before.
She placed her right hand behind my head
(Not one single hint of sisters or December),
And carried me pleasant into the blessed
House where I roamed for hours. Spears and banners
Overcame. Who is this that calls beloved?
A prodigal without swine. A bumpkin slipping
Into the thick of the theater crowd, comforting
A woman who beckons only a temporary bed.
There is a seal over his mouth and no mountain
Moves toward him. The lamp is kept low.
So there comes, in our dark night, over the nation,
A carillon sounding a sound that means us go.

A thirsty woman never questions water.
Who knows of love that has not swallowed black
Milk to make himself whole? They whisper your
Secrets without a single insinuation of cunt or cock,
A tedious pageant meant somehow to pour
Pleasure into the raveled hearts among the briar.
My love is diesel and overgrown, a liquor mired
In apathy's faucet, honey in the well, cracked.
Smoke decrying our statehood rages offshore,
Pushing up the stairwell, blackening the spire's
Must. You said it to me once, now I say it back:
Never mistrust the simplicity of desire.

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Michael Schiavo's poetry has appeared in *LIT*, *McSweeney's*, *Unpleasant Event Schedule*, *Good Foot*, *La Petite Zine*, *Small Spiral Notebook*, and several other fine publications. A work-study scholar (waiter) at the 2004 Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, he currently lives in Connecticut.



Mike Alexander

DECODER RING

Super Sugar Crisps scramble across kitchen floor,
as I pull from a newly opened box, my prize,
a secret decoder ring. The pieces snap together,
an alphabet on a ring that fits around my thumb,
but looks like it could tell the orbit of planets,
or unravel fingerprints under a microscope.
With my secret decoder ring, I decipher
the Volkswagen's license plate, chalk
on the asphalt, the serial code on my bike.
I translate any word into its inner arithmetic.
I fill spiral notebooks with qabalistic equations.
My name, thirteen, nine, eleven, five, which
adds up to thirty-eight, can turn one notch
to the right, into fourteen, ten, twelve, & six,
& I disappear into my codified gematria.
Whatever I decode, I can code again.
I spin the dial, my schoolwork falls behind,
my cereal bowl encompasses the Milky Way,
life breaks into the seven basic food groups.
My vision blurs, & when it clears, I see the earth
itself, a decoder ring, spinning to riddle out
a number like infinity. I see my parents
as number-clusters, multiplying & dividing,
some assembly required, batteries not included.
I see check out lines at the Stop n' Shop.
The future is written on the cover of TV guide.
The revolution will be colorized by TNN.
I tremble at all my decoder ring reveals to me.
The cultural cleansing of my people begins, before
I ever get the chance to answer the \$64,000 question,
before Steve Allen ridicules Kerouac to his face,
before Noxema, before Spic n' Span, before Pillsbury,
before Ed Sullivan goes off the air, before bed-time.
Women no longer wear spotless cotton gloves.
Men stop wearing hats that smell of Arthur Miller.
I see my comic books taken away for my own good,
my DC Giant Batman annual buried in the trash,
Green Lantern, my light & my protection, burnt out,
the complexions of future generations sacrificed
to Aveda ritual, age cream, botox, rhinoplasty,
as angels perform double-helix kama-sutra
configurations to tempt the Super Sugar Bear,
out of diddling with his own secret ring.
I wake up, having missed the best cartoons,
the cornerstone of any nutritious eschatology.
My head is stamped with the Bear's trademark.
Copyright in Excelsis. Free gift inside.
Act now while supply lasts.

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Mike Alexander coordinates a weekly reading series, now in its eighth year, at Helios in Houston, TX, & moderates an internet sonnet workshop at the Sonnet Board. He also serves as one of the associate editors of lyric poetry review. Alexander recommends the San Miguel Poetry Week in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, to anyone who'll listen. He has reviewed poetry for PoeticVoices. His poetry has appeared on-line & in print at Avatar, Link, Newark Review, New Orleans Review, Texas Review, Texas Observer, & other journals.

Vince Lombardi

To tell the story straight is a sin. To tell any story straight is a sin. There's only so much fun with human figures, only so much time to say what you want to say. But never tell the story straight. Or arrange different colors, make objects mere decoration. What despair it takes to make music; what despair it is to add importance to words as you talk. You will look like a goldfish when it pops its eyes out from the bowl. The fish is without sin. We are not. And don't get me started about crucifixion. I want to review all passions, however briefly, and go over my notes each morning. Listen to me: To describe mothers and trees in reference to other mothers and trees—well, that's pretty rotten. And when we get breasts flashed at us that are not our breasts, or watch movies only to look for a mirror-image of ourselves—that is terrific and understandable, respectively. So get all your ducks in a row. Kill old enemies if you have to. But the story, yes, the story, has better things to do. I used to say "song" instead of story in my speeches on this, but people said it was a bit confusing.

Daniel Nester



A Dozen Red Roses For My Darling

Asked yet another time in my hour of escaping taint, subdued and leaning in God-knows-whose loose-collared shirt, the pick and treasure, the whatnot, my astonishment at all this;

And myself, an unfriended former Virginian, this unnatural slowdance with myself—not of revolt, nor of hungry arms, not even my usual sadness—it's the woman sex that stirs me, stirs me to the deeps. Such darling instrumentals, so darling a red rose.

It's those deeps, the deeps that keep me humming.

Daniel Nester is the author of *God Save My Queen* and *God Save My Queen II*, books on his obsession with the rock band Queen. His work has appeared in *Verse*, *LIT*, *Open City*, and *Best American Poetry*. He is the editor of the online journal *Unpleasant Event Schedule*.

LAKE IVANHOE

The leasing agent told him it was gay Melrose,
but most of the neighbors ignored him,
the way they ignored each other,
& me, & the boy in love, until he smashed
not only his girlfriend's car, but every other car in front of her apartment,
a building's worth, including the police car—broke every windshield—
she didn't want to press charges—he was so upset—but the neighbors insisted;

& the pretty girl who put a coffee table of magazines in the hallway as if
inviting you to read an article while you rang her doorbell or walked up
the stairs to your own apartment—she played awfully empty music

loud with her windows open,
smiling to that emptiness;
the fighting hallway girl scream-
ing, *You're going to get me evicted*;
& then she was gone; the family, then, just
the wife & baby, both so young, the hallway
smelling of purple bubble gum—white clogs
in the hall outside her door (bad feng shui), a tiny heart carved
out of each heel—her terrible screaming, his
terrible crying, the baby's, & I never offered to sit; the English

girl in the laundry room who when I
complained about the trek down, said Yes,
*but it's nice to have so many washers—and do
all yr wash at once.* maybe
that's her secret being happy
—finding something marvelous in
all your clothes tumbling at once—her husband
smiling the last time I opened the red door & saw
him paying the pizza man—I wondered at his friendliness,
what good news had opened him, & then
the movers came & now I pass their empty
apartment, all the windows open, window to
window, people have lived here & gone for 50
years, the moon a radium moon with three questions
almost: *What shines like that? As if it were living?*
Speaking in a silver tongue?

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Kelle Groom

Kelle Groom's first collection of poems is *Underwater City* (University Press of Florida 2004). Her second collection, *Luckily*, is forthcoming from Anhinga Press. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Agni*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Luna*, *The New Yorker*, *Poet Lore*, *Witness*, and others. She works as the director of grants for the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida.



Photo credit: Michael Burkard

DAHABIEH

Kim Roberts

In Crimea, Florence Nightingale wore a bracelet
woven from her sister's hair—

now under glass at St. Thomas's
Hospital in London, the country's first
school for nurses.

Her mother was angry:
all the suitors she rejected.

She just wanted Florence
to be safe. After the last one—
after all, her daughter was already
29—Florence left town
to escape her mother's face

whose disappointment could be read
from left to right like a letter.

She went to Egypt
with Charles and Selena Bracebridge,
traveled in a *dahabieh* down the Nile,

and her letters home are filled with gratitude
to find herself walking where Moses walked,
under the shade of the date palms.

She wrote in her journal, *God called me
in the morning, and asked me would I do good
for him alone without reputation?*

Her mind was agitated.

Above the *ungrateful earth*
she saw a radiant sky,
where golden light poured
*not only from the sun
but from all points
of the transparent blue heavens.*

In Egypt, the land of the Arabian Nights
and the Bible, she stepped to the shore line
of every old assumption.

It was a dark and powerful river.
Although she felt weak
as an unworthy vessel,
she put her hand to the tiller
to steer.

Esteban Arellano

San Pio

*In the night, snakes gather
on San Pio's one-lane road
—it radiates July heat.*

I stand on the wooden steps
of Juan Bendito's grocery store.
A longhorn skull hangs above the entrance,
& wagon wheels line the front porch.

From the south, where stars
burn on the Rocky Mountains,
I hear a guitar, an accordion, & castanets.
An old man, a rooster lodged in his throat,
sifts twilight,
*Take the ribbon from your hair,
shake it loose and let it fall,
Lay it soft against my skin.
like the shadows on the wall ...*
Then Spanish,
& I know the song belongs to el viejo.

But my thoughts are on the one-lane road,
covered with snakes, curving
into a moon bigger than the earth,
sitting red-eyed among cactus bloom.

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Life in the Family

— after Kenneth Rexroth

It's easy when your parents are dead—I mean by now my father smells of waterweeds, my good mother smells of mud, or they lean between two hills like fused stones. Of course I wrote about them when they were alive—that was courage of a different kind, Like stealing from your neighbor's gardens in daylight, or singing in an unfamiliar church. So in those days when they could read me I wrote everything with blue ink— Blue as the star, blue as the gull, blue as the heart, blue as the air in the tree... And my mother who drank all night and my father who lived in the center of a page could see mutual love in the blue clouds of my diary.

Nothing in Particular

Because I say this is a poem
It will turn the birches earthward,
But it is also like the weather
So it will have no feeling.
Pegasus I think felt nothing
Circling Mt. Ida. This is sure.
Nature, hand,
Each is the edge of thought only,
The dream of gardens,
Not much will change this.
I swore when I was younger
Polity was in the will,
The moon rose
All a piece
With poems
And I thought of the poem
As being
Like the marks
Of hands,
The calligraphies
Of children
That might change us.
But the platonic horse
Wins finally—we slow a bit,
The moon is voiceless.
And the horse with wings
Without taking thought
Circles the mountain.

By Halves

Mind by halves thinks "ethics"—
Erases ethics, writes "only".

My uncle washed with gin
Thought "defensible" since

He was cross, he was tired...
He lost the book of ethics.

By halves we are ready.
By halves men storm a beach.

Don't we whisper in halves?
I strive to be half a man.

I ache for half the moon,
Half of love, half the luck song

Sung by the cricket
Who sings with half his leg.

Stephen Kuusisto is the author of *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir*, a New York Times "Notable Book of the Year" for 1998, and *Only Bread, Only Light*, a collection of poems from Copper Canyon Press. He teaches in the graduate creative writing program at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. He is currently working on a memoir about "the listening life" which will be published by W.W. Norton in 2005.

WHAT'S GIVEN, WHAT'S TAKEN

Light, for example, or the clapboard crack
slap of recognition, a shadowed body

entering the realm of possibility in ruin.
You enter with your arms outstretched,

your heart pumped with trembling—
a night-starved moth in your mouth.

Who will speak your name in this rubble?
The fires will continue next door, consume

this moment. Down the path, by the ravine
parentless children have learned to pull

worms out of their festering wounds.
Recognition. The names for things.

Happenstance. Remorse is the first crumb
of forgiveness. What is taken then?

Must, if it could, the cloudless sky ask?
Everything, including this short circuitry

of how memory's ash tinges your hands.
BIG ROCK

from which I cast my line, hard
against the backs of my thighs,

my father leaning against me,
brazen for how a fish will tug

hard enough to pull me under,
the way all those ancient poets

saw the moon remove its masks,
pale drunkenness of longing

for what could never be spoken.
A boy, his father, a thin lip

of sandy river, how lives ebb
from one shadow toward light.

This place, this rock, a marker
as big as that invisible fish

taking the bait into its mouth,
going down toward blissful dusk.

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Virgil Suárez

Bring Me The Rain

My mother asks what I want her to bring
me from Cuba this time she goes back,

the last time she will see her father alive,
the last time she will ever see the red of earth

beneath her feet, walking around the house
of her birth and childhood. A cement

foundation is all that's left of her history
with place, an empty well into which

she flung people to make/keep her promises.
"Bring me back the rain," I say over the phone.

I am in New York city, looking at the snow-
covered sidewalks, a man in a red parka

shoveling it like confetti out of the way.
"La lluvia," she says. It's raining

in Miami now, she tells me. There's rain
everywhere. I tell her I do not want Miami

rain, I want Cuba's rain. Only in Cuban
rain do I hear the sound of my life—crisp,

my grandmother chasing after guinea fowl
with a sharp knife hidden behind her back.

My father riding with my grandfather
on horseback, their shirts dampened with sweat,

or the rain from the hills from which they
harvest coffee. My Cuban rain, the kind

that fell on the tin roof of the chicken coop
and lulled me to sleep. The incessant rain,

horses spooked on the pastures, lighting
heavy, flashes of light and shadow against

the pale walls of my forgetting. That rain.

HOW THEY SNEAK UP ON YOU

It happens when you are ten or eleven or twelve. Your mother drags you into the underwear department at JC Penny's or Sears and asks you to choose between the two styles of training bra. You stand there gazing at the yellow rectangular boxes with a Marcia Brady-looking teen model on the front and try to choose between the white bra with tiny blue flowers all over, and the satiny beige one with a bow in the center and wonder why, suddenly, you need a bra. You glance down and are sure that nothing has changed since yesterday, you haven't sprouted overnight like a rose or mold on a tomato, yet standing there in the fluorescent light, you are quickly growing obscene in your thin, red and white baseball jersey. You want to scream and vanish in a puff of prepubescent smoke, but instead you grab the box that holds the neutral beige bra, thinking it will blend with your skin and you might be able to ignore it. On the bus, on the way home, you press the brown bag with the bra tight against your chest because you now feel exposed, because you notice how the bus driver's eyes, reflected in the rearview mirror, shift towards you.

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Terri Carrion

Terri Carrion is assistant editor for Big Bridge magazine online and is last year's director of FIU's Study Abroad Program-Creative Writing in Dublin. Terri's other poems have or will appear in *Vox*, *Slipstream*, *Pearl*, *Mangrove*, *Hanging Loose*, *The Cream City Review*, *Penumbra*, *Paper Tiger*, *TigerTail*, *Street Miami*, *The Miami Sun Post* monthly arts section *Mad Love* and online at *BigBridge*, *Jack Magazine*, *Dead Drunk Dublin* and *Poetic Inhalations*. Her photography will be featured in the next issues of *Jack magazine* online, *Dead Drunk Dublin* and in print in *Gulf Stream Magazine*.

The Salt of Most Unrighteous Tears

I took your towel off,
ran my finger from your nape
to the gully of your butt,

and divined, from the curvature
and notchwork of your spine,
whence you had come and where

you would take me. My eyes closed,
my mind hummed with electricity.
I was not a human being, but a human becoming

seawater under thunder clouds,
clinking its cracked hulls, pearls
and old bones. A gross of skulls

with gold teeth surfaced and clattered
their jaws. A song overcame the tumult
of waves. "Always we see you; our sockets

are mouths that drink your thoughts.
Stay with the woman; let her follow you
wherever she wishes to go. Someday

she'll take you over water. You'll fall.
She'll cry your name while naked,
rolling on the sand."

Kemel Zaldivar



{Featured Artist Frederic Mantos}

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Jayne Pupek



Jayne holds an MA in Psychology and lives near Richmond, VA. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in several online and print publications. *Primitive*, her chapbook of poetry, is forthcoming from Pudding House Press.

FIRST DRAFT

I don't want to fall asleep under charcoal skies
or wake in an empty bed, my mouth full of ash.

The place where you rested is suddenly cold,
vacant as a parking lot where no one sings,

where no one meets for heated groping
in the back seats of cars. Why is there

a bowl of red apples rotting on my table?
Did I forget to eat? Neglect to toss them out

along with verses I scribbled on the backs of napkins
when we were in love?

I have had my fill of all I once longed for.
I'm as cynical as my mother who rubs

green gel on her permed hair. I line up bobby-pins
on my bureau and remember the night

you stabbed my nipple with a pencil
because I stole a glance over your shoulder

and saw the first draft of your note
telling me goodbye.

Jayne Pupek

WITHHOLDING

This house is equal parts blood and stone.
It's mine now, but not entirely.

Walls collect sound. Mine retain voices.
At night, I hear the cricket's black song

rise through cracks in warped floorboards.
The sound doesn't drown quarrels

recorded in the woody grain. I clean
every crevice, but stones hold stain.

Blues tend to fade without dissolving.
What is left is hardly a shadow.

I find persistence where least expected.
Mold grows in dark corners.

I listen hard, strain to hear bread sprout,
an event deafening in its silence.

My lover planted poppies in the window boxes
before she left. They wilt in mid-day sun.

How much water do they need?
If I ever knew, I've forgotten.

Set in fields, poppies survive.
Nature strengthens by withholding.

Perhaps it's the same with a woman.
Withhold love, watch how far she'll go to find it.



(Featured Artist Frederic Mantos)

Zachary Schomburg

What I Found in the Forest

1.

I found a group of inappropriately dressed women inside a hollowed out tree. They all had hidden agendas. When I asked Carlita her name, she told me Madeline. When I asked why they were in a hollowed out tree, all of them became suspiciously uneasy—particularly Madeline (Carlita) who told me to stop talking, and to look deep into her eyes.

2.

I found a group of unusually located trees flowering inside a hollowed out woman. They all seemed to be deciduous. When I climbed the smallest one, it bent underneath my weight. When I climbed the strongest one, I could see forever. But what I saw was a dark forest of hollowed out women, inappropriately dressed, growing trees inside themselves.

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Lisa Gordon

Happy Hour

Blast of jukebox plays decibel dervish
to your still stature, filled full
of vodka & sound that someone not here
perhaps thought of as more than a barrier
to actually having to listen or talk
to anyone behind/beside/beyond himself.

Or avoided thinking,
like you mean to be doing now,
in this reddish light looking down
into icy glass
gamely half full.

The man one stool over drinks beer.
You feel it when he turns his head
curiously toward you. You manage not
to look up.

*Filled full, you think,
equals fulfilled.*

The thought falls short
of spawning anything more.

Now, for as long as the music blares,
it will be perfectly safe for you
to look up or not.

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Lola Haskins

Instructions from the Couturier

Pull up the dress of the waters. How clear it is,
how small bright fish swim across your chest.
Now let the day dim and the edge of the sky turn
green then rose. Let the sun sink behind the
horizon like a coin into a slot. And let the jackpot
dark come on with its millions of stars, huge
bowls of them emptying over your upturned face.

Wear in your ears the evening song of the wren.
From now on, as you tilt your head left and right
before the mirror, there will flourish these tiny
shinings. Notice how the wren's bourree enters—
the hammer and the anvil and the stirrup
arranged on each side, like girls at a dance, to
take it in.

Decorate your shoulders with the bream in the
pond. You can feel their flat leaps like epaulets as
if you've been promoted to a rank you could not
have imagined, in a military to which you did not
know you belonged. Soon you will be striding out
to sweep the unhappy, like fallen leaves, into
piles, to say, fish flapping at your shoulders, *just
look at yourselves, red and orange and yellow,
like fires without a match, just look!*

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After monstrous and cruel things

PJ Nights

Oscar Wilde imagines tulips
brushing his ankles.

Lilies-of-the-valley brush hers –
in this green hour a flower
short in stature whose pervading perfume

rises from the deep dark dirt
they bed down upon.

Oscar Wilde imagines tulips
brushing his ankles –
their panther faces, eager and upturned
crawling into his arms

from a white cemetery on the first
affectionate day of spring.

Oscar Wilde imagines two lips,
hers this tiny woman
still wearing dark's cloak heavily
about her shoulders.

The day ignites slowly, with words
stolen from ancient angels –
the earth breathes through
the louche of new grass.

Oscar Wilde imagines

her lips, tulips – her large sighs
for weeping willows unbuttoned.

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PJ Nights lives by the sea, buys most of her books from the “wall of poetry” at the Gulf of Maine Bookstore, and teaches astronomy and physics at an inland urban high school. The banjo has been put aside for poetry, family, and work, but this is temporary (hopefully! she misses fiddle tunes!).

My Jazz Doem

Paul Guest

It has no jazz in it but the ice hands
of a woman I loved. Outside, no
snow but it was winter. Inside, with art
I waited for her, staring up at
decoupage and crenellated mixed media—
fabric trapped in paint like
a moth in sap. I looked up. The ceiling
receded into soundproofing.
I thought of the word *baffle*, thinking
I'd tell her. I felt the cloud of her hands
with her laugh upon my ears,
baffled, numb in an instant but thawing.
Later, during the play, in darkness
she shed her bra, there where she sat
beside me, tucking it away,
black lace like an etched cloud, like a winter
no one could understand. I
wanted to ask why. I wanted her
not to say. We left before the curtain
meant for us to and next door
live jazz throbbed like a creature
but it was cold and the air had claws,
we kept going. I hummed
later alone, each note fog,
my lips pressed to the horn of the night.



Paul Guest is the author of *The Resurrection of the Body* and *The Ruin of the World*. His poems appear in *Poetry*, *Crazyhorse*, *Slate*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Gulf Coast* and elsewhere.

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It is too much a part of things,
even though the source is not within.

In small American cities
with and without universities,

it keeps a constant presence
in the Confucian sense,

the inner arriving to match
the outer, spirit not separate

from matter (the latter illusion
left by the missions

the people have made such fine
use of). There are times

when you have to pretend
to embrace an idea or befriend

your adversaries. If constantly
misinterpreted, use the mystery

as currency. You have to start
somewhere. Be wise: depart

from where they've already put you.
A country itself can't betray you.

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Adrienne Su



Adrienne Su, author of *Middle Kingdom* (Alice James Books, 1997), is poet-in-residence at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Her work is anthologized in *Poetry 30*, *Poetry Daily*, *The New American Poets*, and *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation*. In 2003 she was the resident poet at the Frost Place in Franconia, New Hampshire. New poems are published or forthcoming in *Poet Lore*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Crab Orchard Review*.

Asian Driver: The Sestina

It's an expression you're not supposed to use, like "black basketball player" or "fat person," unless you are a member of the group, in which case you can even tell jokes. Did you hear about the Asian driver who stopped at the red light?

Actually, no one should use the phrase lightly. Head for the road after using it, and you'll probably be hit by an Asian driver. It's plain hubris, unless you are a person of Asian descent, in which case the joke, in spite of being on your I-group,

might get you blamed, thanks to group affiliation, regardless of who ran the light; such is the power of the joke. Most of my life, I never heard anyone use the expression, but I am only the person I am. Remarks about Asian drivers

probably stopped when I, possibly a driver and certainly Asian, joined the group. For years I believed that every person would be judged on the heeding of lights and signposts, that racial profiling was used solely in the hot pursuit of thieves. Jokes

were trivial. Besides, the only jokes I'd ever heard concerning drivers were the criticisms men and women used against each other (women, as a group, were said to slam on brakes at yellow lights; men sped up; both would harm the person

in the crosswalk). Later, I became a person who wrote textbooks. The boss banned jokes about stupid people, Asian drivers, etc. A light went on: "Asian" was a kind of driver! When I parallel-parked badly, it had group repercussions, same as when I played piano or used

a calculator. Little use in trying to be a person, then, and not a group. Now I try to think of jokes when I'm in the driver's seat, waiting at a light.

The Donner Party

I imagine them lounging
in the late October sun, languid
on a warm afternoon,
with Donner himself,
hat pulled over his eyes,
asleep in the grass,
and Mrs. Reed seated on a boulder
beside him, mending the rip
in her daughter's blouse;

I picture the Breen children
wading at the edge of the Truckee,
and the guides dozing
beneath the whirr of cicadas invisible
in the Ponderosas behind them,

all of them satisfied and rested,
perhaps, for the first time in months,
confident in the slant of light,
now that Stanton
has returned with supplies,

that the push to the summit will be done,
that the following days will lead
down to the San Joaquin;

and I think of them
in that moment convinced,
after stopping five days,
that despite death and delusion
and one mistake after another

after another, that somehow
salvation still remained possible,
and success so close,
a certainty under a clear, predictable
autumn sky.

George Lober is the winner of the 1996 Ruth Cable Memorial Prize for Poetry sponsored by *Eclectic Literary Forum*. His poems have appeared in *Spectrum*, *Sage*, *The MPC Journal*, *Eclectic Literary Forum*, *Quarry West*, *Homestead Review*, *The Central California Poetry Journal*, and *The Anthology of Monterey Bay Poets 2004*. He is the author of **Shift of Light** (Hummingbird Press, Santa Cruz, CA, 2002). He lives in Carmel, California.

George Lober

The Day You Died Was a Beautiful Day

for my father

The day you died was a beautiful day:
by noon the sky had cleared to a calm, deep blue;
a breeze like warm breath lifted off the bay
and moved over the campus where a few
of my students sat laughing together,
on the lawn in front of class—grateful, no doubt,
for the sudden arrival of beach weather
and the few extra minutes to hang out
before I prepped them on their final exam.

That day I brought a cell phone into class,
recognizing, if nothing else, I am
your son, and if the call came in at last,
you'd prefer I do what I'd been paid to do.

I finished their prep, said nothing of you.

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George Lober

Methuselah Knew Scott T. Summers

*And all the days of Methuselah
were nine hundred and sixty nine years,
and he died.*

Genesis 5:27

Methuselah knew how to build a good fire,
how to scrape the scales
off a trout without bruising its flesh,
and to rise as the sun spilt
over eastern hills
because dawn was the best time
to grapple with the grief of dead sons.

Methuselah avoided stepping on ants,
understood the worth of a thick beard.
His memory pocketed friends
like specks of jasper and gypsum.
He polished them at twilight
recalling the strength of their handshakes,
the slant of their smiles.

He knew to sit patiently on tree stumps
amidst the birch and sycamores,
to munch on almonds and peer
through the wood waiting
for tomorrow to cover him like moss.

Slow and silent.
Lost to the world.
At ease with his ghosts.

Perhaps tonight, I'll take off my shoes,
let the backyard grass seal
the gaps between my toes,
hum a song I've never heard,
and toss acorns at the moon.

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Douglas Goetsch

RIDING IN THE BUICK

Riding in the Buick with my father,
I used to pick out an approaching tree
and put myself in its place, standing there
with telephone wires cutting through my neck,
a hip sawed off because I leaned too far
into the road. I would curse my fate:
why couldn't my seed have landed on
the Appalachian trail, or in a rainforest
instead of here, where the only thing
to feel is the breeze of passing cars,
my branches swaying in a hundred shoulders,
a thousand hands waving on my wrists,
and as my father drove into the distance
I bid my shrinking self goodbye.

EASTER HAMPTON BAYS

The surprise of a hard boiled egg
in a shoe, a lamp — something pagan
about it that fit our family
which had no slant on holidays,
just plastic grass and ad hoc
moves Mom made on poor
shy Dad, dangling mistletoe
over him wherever he walked,
Grandpa, on the east end
of Long Island, forever hanging
tinsel, one by one, a tree so perfect
it was sad, sad that a man's pride
came down to this, and Grandma,
soon to leave him, patting his head
saying, *Good boy, Freddy*. Now
it was Easter, time for a drive out there,
time to see cousin Kim and which
way she was wearing her hair,
and how long it would take her
to take off her clothes. The aunts
a year more wrinkled, still with good
legs, in cigarette fog discussing
Nixon and insurance and silicone,
Grandpa holding forth on something
boring like motor oil, his sons
nodding dutifully, as the dunes
advanced glacially on the house.

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A History of Rivers

I don't remember her name
the one who died
or the man who saw a girl chase a leaf
into the current
and followed her

this is how a girl drowns a man
her ropy arms clasp his neck
she drags him down

these are disappearances
Georgia's body found in a field of dry grass
at the end of July
the hit and run boy
we planted a plum tree for in the fifth grade

this is how we marked time
body by body

a river moves
that is its nature
its method

it's nothing personal
finding yourself in that river
is a ghost act
and almost always your own fault

from far away the river shines in a brown line
across the landscape
but if you take it into your hands
the water is clear

it is autumn
and the trees have begun to lose
their leaves
the girl, blue-lipped
all the color drawn from
her skin, floats there
in a still pocket

I did not see her dead
honest
I saw her alive
she was watching cartoons that afternoon
lying on the shag carpet
propped up on her elbows
eating a government surplus cheese sandwich
a can of coke cupped between her small hands

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Marina Wilson is from northern California, where she attended the University of California at Berkeley and worked closely with late poet and activist, June Jordan. Her work has been published in *The Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Crowd Magazine*, and the online magazine *La Petite Zine*. She currently lives in New York City where she earned an MFA from New School University in 2002. She dedicates herself to writing and to teaching poetry in underserved communities throughout the New York City area. The poems in this issue are from a series of poems loosely connected to the Russian River in northern California.

HOME

there were freeways between us
lines of lights between us
rivers of traffic and rivers of rails
and then just the river between us
dry yellow fields and pastures between us
fields cut into neat agricultural squares
barbed wire and wood posts between us
there were rows of stakes and vines and insecticide between us
people stooped over the rows upon rows of vines
and their rough dry hands and the sun beating down on them
sweat and dust buried in their skin

and when the rain came
there was run off, silt streaming into the waters
poison between us
in the air and in the ground and in the water between us
and the gravel roads winding
through the fields and past the river
to the open face of this continent of our splintered existence
there were dark birds circling in the pockets of air between us
there were words thrown against the wind burnt cliffs
and also words we could not speak

until all we were left with was this word
between, between, between
of the words meant to connect one thing to another
of the words meant to explain what things
what people are
to each other
how one object relates to another
we chose the word between
and held it like a blade
and it made us feel brave, it made us feel solitary
and therefore strong
and therefore safe

Marina Wilson



Photo credit: Paul Godwin
www.paulgodwin.com

Jim Fowler

Search for the Meaning of Life

He crawled over cracked crevices
and nicked his knees on gray
granite. Threadbare to the core,
he arrived at Annapurna.

The bodhisattva, brown and lotus
positioned, unmoved by mere human
need, stared at space, under the cap
of mountain and immortality.

"What is the meaning of life,
great guru of enlightenment?"
In a tongue I knew, he cackled,
"Life is but a fluffy cloud."

"You got to be kidding me! Life's a cloud?!"
"You mean it isn't?", he said surprised.

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Jim Fowler



Resides outside of Boston, with four grown kids, six grandkids. His wife owns and runs a flower shop 100 miles away, which gives him time for poetry during the week. The kids professionally examine his legal affairs, his prostate, and his nutrition. All this is fodder for his muse, who came into his life six years ago. Since then, he's been published in print and on-line. In his spare time, he's a managing partner of a medical instrumentation company.

Patrice Vecchione

Outside The Market

A woman's plaintive voice,
in the near-empty parking lot,
early evening, *There you are;*
There you are.

A child gone missing from Kmart?
Or a long lost lover returned out of nowhere?
I imagine red hair a-flurry, a quick,
forward step in high heels.

And again, *There you are,*
the syllables long, the ache in her voice
enough, even with my own hurry,
arms full of groceries
and my upright upbringing,
to turn me around:

a small flock of gulls,
their yellow beaks wide.

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Patrice Vecchione



Patrice Vecchione is the author of **Writing and the Spritual Life: Finding Your Voice by Looking Within** (McGraw-Hill) and the book of poems **Territory of Wind**. Her poetry anthologies include, **Truth and Lies** (Henry Holt), **Whisper and Shout** (Cricket Books) and most recently, **Revenge and Forgiveness** (Henry Holt).

Here & Then

April Ossmann

How strange, to be in two
places at once, or in two times. This
Cambridge Sunday afternoon, *that's*
me, he says—here, sitting with his
tailbone hanging off the couch's
edge, friends and Sunday paper
spread around the living room,

and there, on radio, playing
bass guitar—no three places—
somewhere, *live*, on stage, recording
the song for radio broadcast—
four—his mind remembering
how he felt that day, the place
he played, so he's none

of those places, really, nor here
now, either. And me—I'm five,
giggles rising in the Santa Barbara
air like soap bubbles—my
uncles tickling me—
delight so lucid
I can return to it anytime without

going anywhere—I think. And I
am thirty-two in the summer of '92,
paddling a friend's canoe across
a Vermont pond at dusk.
And you? Are you where your body,
or your mind is, and is this
the reason for our obsession

with our location in space and time?
Some fear we're floating aimlessly
through a fathomless, and therefore,
fearsome universe, or worse, circling
the same memories the way this dog
turns several times around
before lying down at last, to sleep?

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{Featured Artist Frederic Mantos}

April Ossmann



April Ossmann has published her poetry in numerous journals including *Harvard Review* and *Colorado Review*, and in the anthologies *Contemporary Poetry of New England*, and *The Maine Poets: An Anthology of Verse*. She won the Prairie Schooner Readers' Choice Award for ten poems published in the Summer 2000 issue. She is Director of Alice James Books, and has taught creative writing and literature courses at Lebanon College and at the University of Maine at Farmington.

Remembering



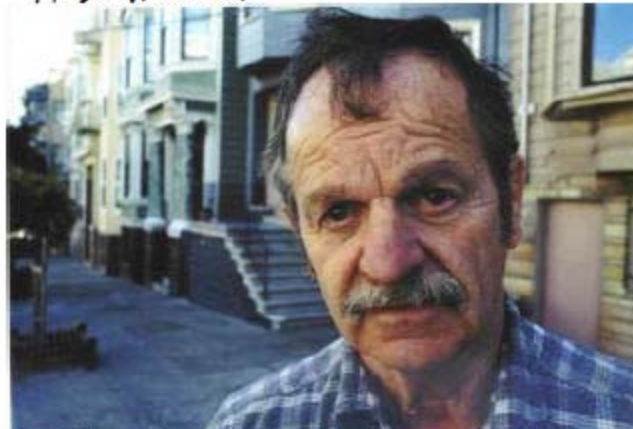
{Featured Artist Frederic Mantor}

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A.D. Winans

I remember how I used
to get into the movies
for twenty-five cents
back when I was twelve
and lived in the Haight Ashbury
long before the Summer of Love
while down on Market Street
they played hi-lo on stage
twice a week and spun the
wheel of fortune calling out the
lucky winner as a busty female usher
ran up the isle yelling:
1, 2, 3, 4 silver dollars
in the balcony
her breasts bouncing with the
dropping of each silver dollar
only fading memories now
like trolley car tokens
like Fleer's double bubble gum
Playland at the Beach
and Sutro's Hot Baths
fragments out of reach
like an aging gypsy woman
reading tea leaves
and finding a death note
in the hands of a sightless conductor
found lifeless three blocks short
of the end of the line

A.D. Winans



A. D. Winans is a native San Francisco poet and the former editor and publisher of *Second Coming Magazine/Press*. He is the author of over forty chapbooks and books of poetry and prose, including *The Holy Grail: The Charles Bukowski Second Coming Revolution*. His work has appeared internationally, and has been translated into eight languages. Most Recent book, *Whitman's Lost Children*, 24th Street Irregular Press. A book of his selected poems

The End of the Line

She listens distraughtly.

The engine has stopped.
The pistons of white clapboard and
lavender azaleas are stilled.
No longer does the axle of paychecks
revolve to put each small day
a little further along than the one before.
The reliably Middle-American wheels sit idly
upon a given . . . a well-paved, well-marked
given . . . suddenly become a taken-away.
They had been promised (yes, she was sure
there was a promise) a destination
where the laws of self break down
and one plus one equals more than just two.
Something else broke down instead,
something intimately yet inaccessibly inside her.
She listens for the sound of the engine
but can hear only the still-echoing
bang when a billion-year-long
line of motherhood, a stay wire anchored
in the primordial lode, snapped with
the doctor's judiciously chosen words . . .

. . . infertile . . . nothing we can do . . .

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Robert Kendall



{ Featured Artist Frederic Mantor }

Charles Levenstein

Aria

There are times when yearning subsides, a moment
in the morning with only twittering birds for company,
the sun is young and a slight breeze ripples Egyptian grass.
Stillness is a pool in which to swim, air brushes
arm and forehead with the long hair of a dancer.

Or times when small bouquets of roses adorn each room,
tea roses, yellow roses, red roses hard as fingernail polish,
parchment white roses, velvet and silk roses, roses weary
after love, the hour not relevant, thick cotton sheets aside,
the day not counted, Tuesday or Sunday, no matter, anytime.

This is not about completion: the rent heart is not at issue,
the imagined sister is not missing. Once at a concert
in a palace in Gratz, bewildered by the exquisite lights,
I dreamed a life devoted to beauty.

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The Woman Who Gave Birth To Stones

Gwendolyn Mintz

The village fell to sleep beneath a moonless sky. The woman lay in the open field near her house, her skirts bunched around her waist. In the distance she could hear the toll of the bells from the church. She did not know the exact hour, but each dong, dong reminded her that time was passing though she no longer knew how many hours . . . three, four . . .

She breathed deep and anxious, groaned as another pain jolted through her. She yearned to press her naked legs together but knew that doing so would not serve her. Turning, she moved onto her side, her head resting on her outstretched arm. As the pains continued, increased, she clawed at the ground, the dirt sifting through her clenched fist.

She breathed and then again, until all echoed pain. Turning again onto her back, she howled with the wind rising and then finally, now finally.

Summoning strength, she rose until she sat, reached between her legs.

There was no sound only blood, which she wiped away with her apron. There was no breath only her tears, which watered the wildflowers, sure to bloom tomorrow in memory. And the wind -

A steady breeze rocked her as she sat with it there in her lap. Then the wind became cruel, teased from her mouth the name Gabriel and carried it away.

The bells again; her husband's voice called to her in its sound.

She swiped at her cheeks. She looked down and gently folded the arms and legs under, tucked the head beneath. She took the ends of her apron so it was cradled as she rose.

Tomorrow, again, they would go to the priest and when it was time, she would lie with her husband, one hand clutching the dark hair at his nape, the other across the pillow, clutching the necklace, fingers entwined in beads.

In the distance, the flame of her husband's face flickered in the window.

At the edge of the path, she knelt, reached into her lap, setting the stone in place behind the last and the others before. She pressed the tips of her fingers to her lips, smoothed her hand along the skin still soft, though it would stiffen like them all now under her feet as she made her way to the door. Not one beneath her steps ever uttering a sound.

Gwendolyn Mintz

Gwendolyn Mintz is a fiction writer and poet. Her work has appeared in various online and print journals as well as four anthologies. Mintz lives with her children, turtles, cats and a dog in New Mexico. When she isn't writing, she designs teddy bears, reads and performs comedy. She is a former news writer and college instructor, but now writes creatively full-time.



First Thoughts

Michael Rothenberg

Morning rain storm
Who are these people twisting tongues in the kitchen?
Why are they laughing in my sleep?

Coffee pot empty
Boil water they'll go away

Flood of night toys
Musical gutters

Worship graven images. TV's on the fritz
In the desert an idolatrous wild tribe

*

think more, some more, think...

High wind warning, thunder lightning
Hail aquaplaning commuters
Mudslides, limbs down
Highway crew, yellow parkas, orange trucks
Deluge at noon

Here pieces slipping
If I could remember I'd see a whole life
But I can't & I don't

*

Blah, blah, blah, jingle, jingle in my head
Memorial service, Ft. Mason, 10am
Rain blowing

Prime Minister Tony Blair requests a seat beside Barbara Streisand At Clinton White House Dinner Bash. Barbara Walters: "It Was Fabulous!"

*

Over coffee:

"If you had job 9 to 5 you'd know what it's like to try and keep a relationship working!"
Walk in my shoes a couple months, baby, then tell me what kind of job
I've got, exactly . . .

*

Back in town, can we get together? How's tomorrow?
"Free," he says, one foot in his pants, the other leg dancing blindly
When?
"Lunch"
(I drop gratefully to my knees)

Then:
"I wish I could help but I want to stay friends"
Could you explain that?

Then:
"I don't want to get divorced until we get along better"
Could you explain that?

(It's getting harder)

Then:
Double-booked, cancelled a song...

Then:
"Hey," I shout through the naked bathroom door, "can't ride you to work. Sorry!"
(run out the door)

Then:
First clear day in exactly 7 days

Then:
Crawl claustrophobic through plastic playland tunnel slung from the rafters
soaked in joyous screams of my son & the garlic waft of pizza

Then:
When you frame it you never know how it'll look

*

Eat tuna on a toasted bagel. Chew a stick of Big Red gum
Take "Democracy In America" off the shelf

Cosmos marches down the hall with a trumpet. Obscene blasting

Feet cold, feel like crying. Read experimental poetry book
What kind of language is this?

Can't sleep. Call a friend. Need someone to talk to
"Sorry," she replies, "Too tired to talk"
Hang up needy. Go to sleep fearful. Fearful

Then:

*

Sexy makeovers on "Sally" and coffee
Ocean wavering under salmon mustard grape light of Fall...

Long after midnight the silent whirl of clock
Position telephone on electric blanket, call & call

Relapse into despair

You don't work regular hours, she says, again

I don't understand (we already talked about that)

Haven't you heard enough?

Make life over with a new doo & new wardrobe
What do we know?

Down the hall the dog scratches, stretches
Maybe I'm hard on myself

Today maybe wake up and lose weight, get rich, wake up history
Maybe if you ask. I'm up to the task. Maybe you don't

*

Here comes St. Valentine's...

Arrows & hearts, hearts & arrows
(Go away)

Cherub slayer muckraker dreamer raising expectation
Come back in a couple years with your enormous puffy pink innocence
& barbed weaponry & romantic resurrection

Come back
Broadcast this tense strung obituary with unfailing strike

(Go away)
Point dipped in the dark night of the soul & a rancid shrug

"Sally,"
When bloody rouge spikes gracefully thinning affliction
Come back. I know what I'll do

Now that I'm strapped for the long haul & all

1/6/98- 2/14/98

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Born in Miami Beach, Florida in 1951, Michael Rothenberg is a poet and songwriter. He has been an active environmentalist in the San Francisco Bay Area for the past 25 years, where he cultivates orchids and bromeliads at his nursery, Shelldance. His songs have appeared in the films *Shadowhunter*, *Black Day Blue Night* and *Outside Ozona*. He is also editor and co-founder of Big Bridge Press and *Big Bridge*, an online magazine. Rothenberg's books of poems include **Favorite Songs**, **Nightmare of the Violins** (*Twowindows Press*), **Man/Women** w/ Joanne Kyger, **The Paris Journals** (Fish Drum), **Grown Up Cuba** (Il Begatto Press, Amsterdam), and **Unhurried Visions** (La Alameda/University of New Mexico Press). He is also author of the novel **Punk Rockwell** (Tropical Press). Editorial projects include *Overtime*, *Selected Poems* by Philip Whalen (Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2002), and **As Ever**, **Selected Poems** by Joanne Kyger (Penguin Books, and David's Copy, **Selected Poems of David Meltzer** (Penguin, 2004). Rothenberg divides his time between Pacifica, California and Miami, Florida.



